

HOLISTIC PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT OF YOUTH THROUGH HIGHER EDUCATION USING THE PROPHETIC PRACTICES

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Abstract

Numerous concerns have been raised regarding the moral decadence and lack of humanism among the youth in the present era of globalization. This has been attributed to the way higher education institutions are preparing youth holistic personality vis à vis absorption of global demands and technological advancements. The world is experiencing serious erosion of values and humanism in this generation and this has been blamed on the nature of education provided by higher education intuitions (HEIs). It is claimed that HEIs are providing education without any meaning to life. It can be argued that in the Muslim world, specifically, the Muslim youths' cognitive capacity has been declining. The lack of holistic education has caused regrettable effects among the youth resulting in a lack of mutual trust and respect, selfishness, untamed fanaticism, and unrealistic worldview. Many parts of the Muslim world have been engulfed with the issues of extremism, radicalism, social breakdowns, bloodshed, and destruction of the glorious Muslim heritage. Since HEIs play an important role in human capital production and community transformation, there is a need for these institutions to integrate the prophetic approach and practices into the methodology of teaching so as to empower the youth through education. The value that education is intended to create should be for educators to create wisdom through such learning experiences that empower students to address current world issues and equip them with a personality that is thoughtful, realistic, practical, open-minded, and action-oriented. Educational models can achieve excellence by following the ways and methods of teaching adopted by our beloved prophet Muhammad ﷺ. Lessons can be drawn from how the prophetic model transformed the youth from materialistic, hedonistic, and the arrogance of Jahiliyyah into *Ruhban Billayl*, *Fursan Binnahar*. The main aim of the paper is to analyze the role and purpose of higher education in present times and its impact on youth's personality development. The article also unpacks the prophetic model of holistic youth personality development and suggests a way forward regarding its implementation in the HEIs.

Keywords: Holistic education, prophetic approaches and practices, youth personality development, quality education

Introduction

The commandment to acquire knowledge and education forms one of the fundamental basis of the Islamic faith. It is commanded to the humanity from their Creator that they should read and seek knowledge. Allah SWT says:

'Recite in the name of your Lord who created, created man from a clinging substance, Recite, and your Lord is the most Generous, who taught by the pen, taught man that which he knew not'. Q: 96:1-5.

Islam accentuates education as a matter of same significance as jihad – a means to defend one's nation and one's people - implying that knowledge is not only a requirement but also the foundation of the religion. It was narrated that Abu Hurairah said: "I heard the Messenger of Allah ii say: 'Whoever comes to this mosque of mine, and only comes for a good purpose, such as to learn or to teach, his status is like that of one who fights in Jihad in the cause of Allah'" (Sunan Ibn e Majah, Book of Sunnah, Hadith no 227, Classified as Sahih By Allama Albani). There is nothing more worthy of attaining in this world than the right education. It is reported from the prophet ﷺ that:

الدُّنْيَا مَلْعُونَةٌ، مَلْعُونٌ مَا فِيهَا؛ إِلَّا ذِكْرُ اللَّهِ وَمَا وَالَاهُ، وَعَالِمٌ أَوْ مُتَعَلِّمٌ

It means, "The world is cursed. So is everything in it; except for the remembrance of Allah and what facilitates it, the scholar and the seeker of knowledge." (Sunan Nasai – *Hadith is classified as Hasan, Ghareeb*). It is clear from this hadith that the knowledge or any other matters that diverts us from remembering Allah SWT or seeking knowledge is cursed. If we use our knowledge, our abilities, resources at our disposal, technology and facilities we have for the remembrance of Allah and what He has commanded in His book and through His messenger, then it is a blessing, if we don't, it's a curse.

Education in present times is generally considered to be a means for circulation of ideas or cultivation of ideas in which cognitive process of receiving information and being able to give back information is the key goal. However, there is a need to go beyond mere circulation of ideas. It has to be a means of getting us closer to our Creator and enabling us benefit and serve His creations. As the world is going through unprecedented political turmoil and turbulent moments, higher education institutions (HEI) seem to be at a failing in providing practical and long-term solutions to the major societal problems such as corruption, oppression, depression, aggression, and the violation of human rights. It is not only the ignorant and uneducated who commit such atrocities and social crimes; a large percentage of such people comes from higher education background too. These challenges have continued to exist for years as result of HEIs being inundated with the issues of globalization and technological advancement rather than tackling them as a first priority. Currently, the institutional leadership has been diverted into meeting global demands of competition for ranking with little or no concern towards improving the plight of the world we live in, in terms of the complex changing environment and the relevant ecological, technological, legal, economic and social implications. The growth of the recent phenomenal challenges has continued to significantly influence the educational outcomes. Furthermore, the phenomena of corruption, oppression, character assassination, greed, depression, and aggression are not restricted to students or society in general, but also witnessed among the highly-educated university leadership and staff all over the world (Norsuhaily et al..2015). This kind of behavior and attitudes among university staff is becoming a cause of disintegrated personality of the students and producing individuals who are rich in knowledge but poor in ethics (Campbell, 2015). In addition, the known places of human capital production, universities, for boosting economic transformation have now sunk into following a business model at the expense of core academic purpose for their existence. There main issues have been the economic competitiveness, loss of talent and commitment among staff, unsustainable leadership and unsuitable health of learning environments. The increased competition for ranking in HEIs has led to numerous unhealthy shifts in the management style. We often hear business phrases

in the educational settings which is a testimony to the business mind-set that many of the institutions have now adopted (Rosnani & Mina, 2015).

The current system was defined very early by the scholars after the WWII when the basis of present educational system was laid. It was expressed that, “the scientific methodology is extremely limiting and anti-human and it descends into the mechanization of the human personality” (Ashraf, 1991). As a result, Muslim youths’ cognitive capacity has been limited by an educational system whose essence leads to moral decadence and loss of values. The cognitive dissonance and frames of reference among the youth today is what is transmitted to them through the nature of education available in many of the Islamic countries. This has resulted in a lack of trust and respect for one another, selfishness, and wildly fantastic expectations. These issues have spiralled up and expanded into much bigger issues including radicalization of youth, extremism, social breakdowns, internal and external wars, destruction of the rich Muslim heritage, lack of responsibility, and mercilessness. Numerous scholars, including Al-Attas, (1993), Abusulayman, (2007), Campbell, (2015), Dzulkifli, (2015), Sedik (2013), and Rosnani & Mina, (2015) argue that HEIs can only be rescued from the present state of decline and intellectual slavery by making use of both the sine-qua non and ambidextrous approaches of neutralizing the hegemonic system of education and complete overhauling of the relevant educational processes. In alignment with this, Abdullah Ahmad Badawi has said “ I believe we will need nothing less than an education revolution to ensure that our aspiration to instil new performance culture in the public and private sectors are not crippled by our inability to nurture a new kind of human capital that is equal to the task of challenges ahead”.

On a positive note, we see a change already beginning at numerous places. Many countries, including Malaysia and India, have aligned their national educational systems to the four important principles that enhance the objective and outcomes from the higher education: easy access to education, equal opportunity, quality of education, efficiency and effective delivery of education (Bhatta, 2010; Sundanese & Nandakumar, 2015). Though the effort is going in a positive direction, some gaps still exist and some groups have still been marginalized.

This prompts us to reconsider our approach towards personality development and the role HEIs can play in facilitating it upkeep. ‘Personality’ is a term used for the combination of characteristics or qualities that form an individual's distinctive character. If we focus on the personality of a specific individual, we can define it as that person’s particular set of enduring dispositions or long-term tendencies to think, feel and act in particular ways. When we look at personality development from a holistic perspective, it becomes evident that it refers to developing a person into the very best person he or she can be. As a Muslim, we believe that our creator and His messenger ﷺ know the best means and methods which enable us achieve this. Our Lord, Allah SWT, sent his messenger ﷺ for this very purpose. It is mentioned in a hadith that:

عَنْ مَالِكٍ أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ بُعِثْتُ لِأَتَمِّمَ حُسْنَ الْأَخْلَاقِ

Malik reported: The Messenger of Allah ﷺ, peace and blessings be upon him, said, “I have been sent to perfect good character” (Al-Muwatta, *Hadith is classified as Saheeh*).

In the next section, we have present some of the examples of how he ﷺ shaped the personality of youth.

Prophetic practice of youth personality development

For the survival and sustainability of higher education institutions in a competitive, volatile, and quickly changing world, there is need for these institutions to integrate the prophetic methodologies and ethics so as to be more holistic and interconnected in human values with greater emphasis on the concerns of others as per the statement of Ibn Siraj: *"Scatter your good deeds all round, not caring whether they fall on those near or far away, just as the rain never cares where the clouds pour it out, whether on fertile grounds or rocks"* (Campbell, 2015). To secure an integrated personality there should be holistic and value oriented education through which erudition and acuity of the prophetic ways can be achieved, and thereafter enable the optimum development of several aspects of humanity that range from the physical, emotional, mental, aesthetic, moral to spiritual entities of learners (Sundaresan & Nandakumar, 2015). Below are the ways through Prophet Muhammad ﷺ shaped the youth personality development.

The prophet of Islam ﷺ taught youth the basic principle of being Khalifatul Allahi fil Ardhi (being vicegerent of Allah on earth) to heal the mental chaos and illness of inhuman behavior among the Meccans. It was unveiled to the youth that the ultimate sovereignty rests with Allah, whereby, the air, the water, the light and whatever is there in the heaven and the earth belongs to Him.

وَلِلّٰهِ مَلِكُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ

Therefore, the man has no right to claim ownership of anything. It means that there should not be any dispute, wars, or fights over the resources through oppression of the weak. It can actually be better understood when man come to grips with understanding that even the body he possesses, the energies and organs are all bestowed upon him by Allah. We are here to use them in the manner that they have been prescribed to be used. As the Khalifah or Allah, we have to work for the betterment of this world and taking care of its resource and be a guardian for its natural processes and treasures. Our role is to facilitate its upkeep, not its destruction.

The role of HEIs in this sense is to help the youth understand their responsibility towards others through elements of believe in Allah so that their minds are impressed with working towards the hereafter.

The prophet ﷺ was appointed to rescue the mankind from darkness through education and transforming their minds, thoughts, and character. Allah SWT says in Surah Imran (interpreted meaning): *"Certainly Allah conferred a benefit upon the believers when He raised among them a Messenger from among themselves, reciting to them His communications and purifying them, and teaching them the Book and the wisdom, although before that they were surely in manifest error"* (Surah Ale Imran 3:164). The prophet ﷺ accordingly explained the laws were communicated to him from Allah SWT and the explained the true purpose of life.

Examples of how he transformed the lives are uncountable. Mus'ab bin Umair, the Meccan youth, completely changed track of his life after meeting with the prophet ﷺ and staying under his company. From being a person engulfed in luxuries of this worldly life, his transformation of personality took him to the pinnacles of piety and he received the honour of being a martyr. At the time of his departure from the world, the prophet ﷺ gracefully looked at him, smiled and said: *"I have seen this Musab with his parents in Makkah. They lavished care and attention on him and gave him all comforts. There was no Qurayshi youth like him. Then he left all that seeking the pleasure of God and devoting himself to the service of His Prophet."*

The prophet ﷺ during his time nurtured several young companions as great leaders. Some of such notable companions include Usama ibn Zaid, Abdallah ibn Umar, Ubbai ibn Kaab, Ali ibn Abi Talib, and others. The prophet ﷺ treated them like a father and they were free to ask him about any matter that concerned them.

In another event, the Prophet ﷺ stated that: *"There will come a time when God will grant you victory over Persia and Byzantium. You would have one dress in the morning and another in the evening and you would eat out of one dish in the morning and another in the evening."* In other words, the Prophet ﷺ predicted that the Muslims would become rich and powerful and that they would have material goods in plenty. The companions sitting around him asked the Prophet ﷺ: "O Messenger of Allah ﷺ, are we in a better situation in these times or would we be better off then?" He ﷺ replied: *"You are rather better off now than you would be then. If you knew of the world what I know, you would certainly not be so much concerned with it."* From this, we learn another important aspect of personality development for the Muslims – the consciousness that the life of this world is small and what comes next would be forever. The prophet emphasized that the man will be answerable to the Creator for his actions and inaction. It is mentioned in the noble Quran (interpreted meaning): *"...Are you pleased with the life of this world rather than the hereafter? But little is the enjoyment of the life of this world as compared with the Hereafter"* (Quran, Al-Tawbah: 38). It is also mentioned that: *"And the life of this world is nothing but play and amusement. But far better is the house in the hereafter for those who are Al-Muttaqun (the pious). Will you not then understand?"* (Quran, Al-An'aam: 32). The Prophet ﷺ, too, clarified the value of this life in relation to the hereafter. He said, *"The life of this world compared to the hereafter is as if one of you were to put his finger in the ocean and take it out again then compare the water that remains on his finger to the water that remains in the ocean"* [Sahîh Muslim (2858)]. A person with this active consciousness would refrain from being unjust to the creations of Allah SWT and follow His commandments. The piety and awareness that such a consciousness brings has the power to transform the entire society. If we inculcate this consciousness in the educational processes, the youth will be able to understand that they have a great task to contribute positively to the community that they must not harm others for worldly gains at the expense of the hereafter which is never-ending. Abu 'Abbas Sahl ibn Sa'd as-Sa'idi said that once *"a man came to the Prophet, ﷺ, and said, 'Messenger of Allah ﷺ, show me an action for which Allah will love me and for which people will love me if I do it. He said, "Do with little of this world and Allah will love you, and do with little of what belongs to other people and people will love you"* (Ibn Majah).

The Prophet (SAW) always gave glad tidings to the youth for their good acts and re-enforced their positive behaviours. Abu Huraira reported: The Prophet, peace, and blessings be upon him, said, *"There are seven persons whom Allah will shade on a day when there is no shade but his. They are a just ruler, a young person who grew up in the worship of Allah, a person whose heart is attached to the mosques, two persons who love each other and who meet and depart from each other for the sake of Allah, a man whom a beautiful woman of high status seduces but he rejects her by saying I fear Allah, a person who spends in charity and conceals it such that his right hand does not know what his left hand has given, and a person who remembered Allah in private and he wept."* (Şaḥiḥ al-Bukhari 629, Şaḥiḥ Muslim 1031). Through conviction, vision, unshakeable commitment, and brotherhood, the prophet ﷺ transformed the hostile Arabian youth of the time and nurtured among them those who ruled the world for many centuries to come (Campbell, 2015). HEIs, therefore, have a great model in how the prophet ﷺ reformed and revitalised the community from Darkness to light. Those timeless principles can shine our lives with equal brightness as they did for the early Muslims.

The prophet ﷺ taught Islam to his companions rooted in the concept of *"Mizan"*, that is the balanced equilibrium. The purpose of this teaching is to encourage maintaining a balanced perspective and taking the middle straight path. Through the use of this methodology, challenges of culture and social cohesion were addressed. The concept of mizan was meant to ensure justice, accountability, and harmony. Allah SWT says *'And the heaven He raised and imposed the balance, that you not transgress within the balance...'*. This aspect of balanced approach was iterated and reiterated to Muslims throughout the 23 years of prophethood from the humble beginnings of Islam with a few converts in Makkah to the establishment of the state and conquering the superpowers of the time (Keeler, 2015).

The Role of Higher Education

Higher education institutions are the factories where the new knowledge is produced and the existing knowledge is disseminated. HEIs have to ensure that rather than considering this a mechanical process with no spirituality or emotions attached to it, an atmosphere should be provided where the holistic personality development is fostered. Personalities are formed from experiences and feelings. The environment and experience we provide to the students should be conducive to the development of positive traits that our society earnestly needs. The can be achievement through a proper modeling, application, and actualisation of morality embedded in the educational processes. If special attention is not rendered to this aspect and institutions continue with monetising every aspect of existence, the present situation would only change for worse. HEIs have to attend to implanting in student a sense of caring, dignity, calmness, positivity, optimism, spirituality, and hard-work. HEIs also need to incorporate mechanisms in the educational settings that enhance vision of the students, as in current times of darkness, many a times, they are not able to figure the way to their destination (Sofia & Noor, 2015). Through the use of diversity and equality, HEIs should be ready to bring to order the issue of coexistence through appreciation of other peoples' views, understanding, and religious affiliations. With this kind of approach, selfish interests, for instance, extreme spiritualism which has come up due to extreme humanism and extreme materialism can be curtailed (Al-Attas,1993; Abusulayman,2007) By doing so, the continuous state of

contradiction on the globe with strange phenomenon that divorce from unknown human behavior will be shunned.

The role of HEIs is to resurrect hope into the minds of the youth, who find it very hard to have a positive light and earn a living in proper ways without being victims of selfishness, greed, and wrongdoing.

The quality of education

Today HEIs have the autonomy to run curriculum based on their mission and vision, however, there are many loopholes that still exist which are restricting the preparation of a holistic personality for the students. The reason for this is that the type of knowledge taught is espoused in colonial tendencies and culture whose aim was to promote selfishness and capitalistic ideas (Norsuhaily et al ..., 2015; Campbell, 2015; Albert, 1993). Whereas the Islamic perspective requires education to perpetuate its endeavors towards the development of a holistic personality which fully integrates the intellectual, spiritual, emotional and physical abilities of a person and prepares him or her to lead a well-balanced life in harmony with the principle of submission to God (Dzulkifli, 2015). Accordingly, a product of this area should be able to skilfully and responsibly handle both personal and community issues. Meanwhile, HEIs also need to address their own challenges by styling up staff attitudes and caring for the students.

Students get a lot of influence from their lecturers. It is unfortunate that some of the employees in the HEI are more concerned about earning, either by hook or crook, with little or no appreciation of how their attitude shape the personality of the students. This can be considered to be a result of the systems through which these people themselves have gone through. When it comes to searching for talent for international ranking, these institutions recruit staff to compete favourably in the world market based on their qualifications and achievements with no consideration about their own personality or the personality they are capable of fostering in their students. Institutions need to challenge themselves by preparing their own human resource agendas and establishing mechanisms of maintaining the true quality indicators.

Application of Maqasid Al-Shariah

Al-maqasid Alshariah is what the educational institutions need to consider in planning their educational systems and policies. Maqasid Al-Shariah is a science of extracting the wisdom or principles behind the Islamic commandments and then following those principles in identifying solution to the problems. Some of the important maxims identified through the Maqasid Ash-Shariah include protection of religion, protection of life (spiritually and physically), prevention of harm, protection of intellect, protection of property (including natural reserves, the environment and ecosystem), justice, and so on (Auda, 2008). It is unfortunate that the focus of many Islamic higher education institutions today is the petty matters of fiqh, whereas what is required is the broader consideration towards the societal matters of identification of their solutions in the light of maqasid al-shariah. The universal principles and maxims extracted from the maqasid are not only beneficial for the Muslims and Islamic universities, but also for non-Muslims and secular universities. These pertinent aspects are the basis through which today's forms of crises, challenges and

turbulent moments can be addressed. Dzurkifli states “it is through Al maqadi Alshariah that justice can be championed, wellbeing, bliss and wisdom transcending in all eras to achieve total affluence for every one” Thus, these principles can be used to form the basis of reformation that our educational systems need in today’s time and age.

Conclusion

Though many people consider education to be a means that enable us earn a reasonable living, acquire a good job, or setup a successful business, these aspects are not always linked to certain level of education or qualifications. The McKinsey Global Institute found that in South Korea that the level of education (i.e. having a degree or a high school certificate) did not play any significant role over the lifetime since people with these various levels of education were not different in terms of attaining good jobs and earning. Moreover, according to a study by ICEF, (2013) in Korea, the Anxiety over academic and occupational concerns were among the top reasons that prompted suicide among the teenagers. Therefore, for us to rescue the world from turbulence it is going through, HEIs should redefine the meaning and objective of the philosophy of education in accordance with what has been taught to us by the prophet ﷺ so as to meet the innate human need and stature in a balanced manner (Dzhulkiful, 2015). HEIs need to produce citizens that possess a physically, intellectually, socially, emotionally and spiritually balanced personality instilled with the laudable values to support unity and community integration.

In conclusion, the real purpose of education should be preserving the life in accordance with one of the major principle of *Al-maqasid Al-shariah* as espoused in the first three ethical issues that the prophet ﷺ taught to the Ummah before exposing it to other Islamic teachings. It is not acceptable for professionals to give way to the wastage of life through suicide and terrorism. Many of these acts are a result of imbalance in educational systems between various sectors within the societies or between the various societies. The phenomenon is not restricted to developing countries, but the stable countries like Hong Kong, Japan, South Korea, and so on, are experiencing some of the highest rates of suicide (WHO, 2011).

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